



Deval L. Patrick, Governor  
Timothy P. Murray, Lt. Governor  
Jeffrey B. Mullan, Secretary & CEO  
Luisa Paiewonsky, Administrator



February 8, 2011

Leonard M. Sussman, Chairman  
Chatham Board of Selectmen  
549 Main Street  
Chatham, MA 02633

Dear Mr. Sussman:

I am responding to your letter of January 12, 2011, regarding the status of the Mitchell River Bridge in Chatham. I wish to reiterate to you that this project remains programmed for funding under our Accelerated Bridge Program. As you know, the ABP is an eight-year program with funding available through June 2016. Therefore, all ABP projects must be permitted, designed, and fully constructed during that time frame. The determination by the Keeper of National Register of Historic Places that the Mitchell River Bridge is eligible for the National Register does not have any bearing on the availability of funds for this project.

On October 29, 2010, my staff met with several members of the Board of Selectmen to provide a project update, assure the Town that MassDOT and Federal Highway Administration is fully committed to this project, and to completing a full review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. As part of our continuing compliance with Section 106, MassDOT is investigating whether or not the existing wooden bridge can be repaired or rehabilitated. We anticipate that a rehabilitation feasibility report will be completed by the end of February and the results made available to all stakeholders.

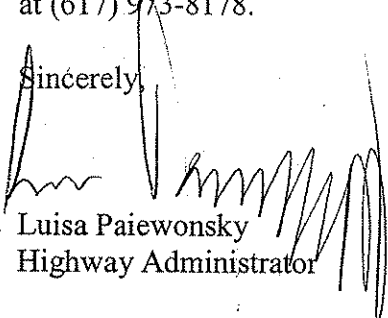
In the event that we determine that the bridge cannot be rehabilitated, MassDOT is confident that we can mitigate the adverse effect of removing the bridge by working with the Town and the consulting parties to come up with a design that will honor the historic character of the existing bridge. However, MassDOT continues to have very serious reservations regarding the proposed use of wood piles in the water. We are confident that as the evaluations are completed, we can confirm our position regarding use of wood in water. As referenced in your letter regarding my remarks to the Boston Globe, we take the determination by the Keeper seriously. However, the Keeper's determination does not obligate the Commonwealth to fund or replace the existing structure with a full wooden structure, but only to show that we have fully avoided, minimized or mitigated the removal of the structure.

In addition, at the request of the Town and other interested parties that have attended the public information meetings to date, MassDOT is evaluating several superstructure options, including cladding over steel and concrete and the use of wood for the railings, sidewalks and the riding surface. Once these evaluations are complete and acceptable to both MassDOT and the Federal Highway Administration, MassDOT will meet with the consulting parties to present the results and make the results available to the Town.

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I hope this adequately answers your questions and I thank you for your continued support for this project. If you have any further questions, please contact Joseph A. Pavao, Jr., Project Manager, at (617) 973-8178.

Sincerely,



Luisa Paiewonsky  
Highway Administrator

cc: Frank A. Tramontozzi, P.E., Chief Engineer  
Shoukry Elanhal, P.E., Deputy Chief of Bridges and Tunnels  
Thomas Donald, P.E., Director Project Development  
Joseph A. Pavao, Jr. P.E., Project Manager